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Kindergartens for the sightless.

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KINDERGARTENS FOR THE SIGHTLESS.

BEFORE speaking of the use of the kindergarten in the education of the blind, I should like to say a few words about the blind themselves, for I think that the general conception of the blind is very far from a correct one. The seeing regard the blind either as defectives only asking for sympathy, or as wonders, whom the Creator has endowed with marvellous remaining powers to make up for the loss of one. The blind are neither; they are simply human beings just as you are; working out their destiny in the dark, just as you are working out yours in the light; failing only from the want of character, as you do; and succeeding by the force of character, as you do. They ask for opportunity, not for alms, and are thoroughly capable of self-support if they can but get the confidence of the community. Their success, which we often see recorded, is not phenomenal, and the case of Montal, who revolutionized piano-tuning in Paris, was only the result of a community's confidence, and is being repeated every day in a smaller degree wherever this confidence is given.

It is true that the other faculties of the blind are often more developed than with the seeing, but this is not by miracle, but through exercise, just as one arm is developed more than another, only because one arm is exercised more than another. The blind boy concentrates his mind more than the seeing boy, for he has not the diversion nor distraction of sight. His memory is stronger because he must exercise it more. His touch is more delicate because he must depend upon it for his sight, and his power of realization must be more real, for every act of his, from his contact with his playmate to the use of a knife for his dinner, must be an act of realization. But to prepare him for the use of these mental

powers he must be taught—he must actually be taught to live—for no act of his is unconscious, and here he differs from the seeing.

When the city boy goes out upon the street, the house, the shop, the pictures in the window, the railroad car, the fire engine, all the ordinary objects of city life come to him without effort in his daily walk, and he learns to know them unconsciously. The country boy in the same way learns to know the road and the wild flowers on its side, the wood and its trees, “the lowing herd winding slowly o’er the lea,” “the swallow twittering from his straw-built shed,” the passing cloud and the shadow on the grass, all come to him unconsciously—an immense education without a conscious effort.

Not so with the blind. The mother’s knee must be touched to know it, the mother’s face must be touched to know it, and the father’s hand. The glance of the eye, the motion of the lips, with all their silent influences, are all lost to the blind, for they can learn only by contact. Is it any wonder, then, that both the poor and the rich misunderstand the blind and their development, the poor regarding their lives as useless and the rich thinking they must be supported always?

A poor woman brought to the Maryland School for the Blind, the other day, a little boy who took his seat upon the floor, and when we asked her if she had never taught him to sit upon a chair, her reply was: “Why, no—he is blind.” We have the same difficulty with the wealthy. They care for their children to such an extent that all self-dependence is destroyed, and we have had their children come to us unable to button a shoe, and actually not knowing how to grasp a hand. We even have to teach the children how to play.

A child was sent to us a short time ago and was placed by the mother in a rocking chair. This was all the play it knew. It took us months to teach that child what every

seeing child learns without teaching, and now this child runs around and plays as other children do. We have often to "unteach," and have really more difficulty in this than to teach. Now, all the blind need is to be brought into contact, physically and mentally, with the world around them, and they have proved their capability of taking care of themselves.

We can only sow the seed and leave the rest to that glorious law of growth in the spiritual and material world which produces the magnificent oak from the tiny acorn. The development is the part of the Creator; ours is to choose the best seed and till the ground as best we may. For this purpose we have found nothing to equal the kindergarten. It so combines the moral and the physical, and the moral through the physical; it, in so simple a manner, brings the inner mind into contact with the outer world that I must explain to you its rudimentary principles.

I know that many readers of the *REVIEW* are already acquainted with them, but not many, I think, have thoughtfully considered how wonderfully suited this work is for the blind.

Through what you have already seen you have a good idea of what the advanced kindergarten work may be, and I will give but one object lesson. We begin with a ball attached to a string. Through this object we give the ideas of form, measurement and direction. By swinging the ball we get six motions, right, left, up, down, backward and forward. By taking the ball in the hand we give the idea of form, and call attention to the roundness of the world, the heavenly systems, the apple, the peach, the grape, and many other fruits, and we then take the pupils to raised models through which we can teach them to realize those forms.

We then take two balls, one softer and the other harder, and the blind thus get the idea of softness and hardness. The

ball is then opened and is found to consist of different substances—rubber, wool, cotton. The rubber carries them to South America; is explained to them as the juice of a tree hardened by heat, and thus the blind get the ideas of geography and the first principles of botany and physics.

The hand is then put upon a model sheep, with the wool on his back. The blind are shown the spun wool, the thread or yarn and the cloth, and thus are introduced into natural history and to one of the great products of industry. The cotton covering is then taken up, and a model is put in their hands of a seed with its first efforts for growth; the stalk, the blade and a green boll are given them and the ripened boll. Then comes the spool and the cotton cloth, and they are thus introduced to the plant life, and again to factory products.

The string gives the idea of length and measurement and those other relations which I will not stop to mention. From these simple forms they are given a knowledge of wood and iron, and the whole revelation, which nature brings of God's creation, comes into their mental world simply by touch.

Each step stimulates the curiosity of the little learner, and this curiosity once gratified, there is a constant demand for more. I could easily give you examples how in this manner game-plays become steps in education, strengthening not only the manual dexterity but the inventive power. But I shall have to refer you for this to any book on kindergartens. You can readily see that the development of these lessons is only limited by the extent of the models at command, and these models are expensive.

Lay too much stress upon this expense and you take just so much out of the life and out of the possibilities of the child. Act with liberality, and each liberal act only brings a wider world and a broader life within the reach of the child. Boston, Philadelphia and New York early recognized this, and

have endowed their schools with over a million each. Their institutions are their pride.

In three years Boston's kindergarten received \$100,000; \$54,000 were given to purchase grounds, and voluntary gifts are fast adding \$100,000 more.

Is it asking too much, that those who enjoy the blessing of sight should take this matter to heart? I know that the liberal are called upon for many contributions, and I know that they respond liberally, but is there any direction in which that liberality can be better exercised than by throwing light across the path of those who, without any fault of their own, are obliged to work in the dark to become useful men and women? Such liberality would make their struggle easy, and make the realization of their possibilities certain, and I cannot believe that an appeal in such a cause as this can be made to the heart of any community in vain.

JOHN GLENN.

WHAT IS THE COST OF LIVING ?

WHAT is the cost of living ? This question presents one of the most difficult problems in statistics—a problem which lies at the base of the whole labor controversy. The answer must embrace at least three distinct parts. First, we must know the income of the laborer, as shown by his wages, and whatever other earnings he may receive. Secondly, we must have the prices which he is required to pay for the articles and services which he consumes ; for it is not mere money that the laborer desires, but rather that which the money will enable him to procure. Then, thirdly, this information will be almost useless for our purposes unless we know the quantities of different articles and services required, and the proportion of absolute necessities to comforts and conveniences. That any one particular sum can ever be established as the average cost of living, is as little to be expected as that the physiologist will be able to determine the invariable minimum quantity and quality of food necessary to sustain human life ; there are so many modifying circumstances: age, sex, race, habits, climate, etc.,—that certain limits are set to every investigation, although within those limits, valuable results may be obtained. But in applying these results the limitations must not be overlooked.

There have been numerous attempts to arrive at the cost of living of the laborer, ranging from the wildest guesswork to the most careful statistical study. One of the roughest forms comes to light in the administration of the income tax. The theory here is that expediency advises the exemption from taxation of the minimum cost of subsistence for the reason that, if anything is subtracted from such a minimum, the State will be compelled to restore an equivalent amount in the form of poor relief. In actual practice, however, the

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